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An Interview With:

MISSOURI COACH FRANK HAITH

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by coach Frank Haith, your thoughts about the upcoming season.

COACH HAITH: First of all, we're really excited about the upcoming season. My first year at Missouri, and we've had some -- losing Laurence Bowers obviously hurts our team, but I will tell you that our guys have handled that very well.

First couple of days of practice have been really, really good. But I think we've got a good team. We've got good guards and a team that's very capable of being very competitive in this league.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. You mentioned Laurence being out. How have you seen your guys specifically sort of work around the fact that Laurence isn't going to be there now?

COACH HAITH: We didn't have a lot of size to begin with, in terms of our front line. And losing a guy that's probably one of your better rebounders and we got outrebounded by five last year, you know, I think the one thing we tried to address with our team is not just our front line that's going to have to pick it up, it's got to be our guard play.

It's got to be our coaching staff. I think everybody has to give a little bit more. The one thing I will say about Laurence, which has been unbelievable, he's a tremendous leader, but he doesn't want people feeling sorry for him. And I think his attitude and how he's handled this situation has been really good for the growth of our basketball team.

Q. I know this is your first year in Columbia, but what do you know about the games with Kansas and the rivalry there?

COACH HAITH: Well, I notice a big rivalry, no doubt about it. And I have spent seven years in the state of Texas at Texas A&M and at Texas, and seeing that game being played and the interest in that game, the enthusiasm in that game.

I'm excited about that opportunity. And we get a chance to play everybody twice. And I think they always played everybody twice because they were in the North division.

But you know being a part of a rivalry is exciting. And I've been at places where we've had that opportunity. But I hear there's no game like this game.

Q. These Mizzou teams have become known for that pressure defense, three of the top five leaders in steals in the conference last year come from Mizzou. What's going to be different about how you're going to approach the defense this team plays and how are you going to take advantage of the skills of the guys that are already there and kind of look pretty similar to what they have done in the past?

COACH HAITH: That's a great question. That's a really good question. I think that we will have pressure, but we may -- our pressure will be at different levels. I think that, you know, we do have those kind of skill sets in terms of these guys have great quickness. They have good hands, and they know how to knock balls loose.

We'll have to take advantage of that. I don't know we'll be full-court pressure all the time. I think when I say different levels, we may bring it back to a three-quarter. But definitely our focus has been better half-court defensive team. And we've got to be able to keep that ball out of the paint because we don't have a lot of size.

So there's no question that's an advantage of ours, and we gotta utilize that. But the thing you've got to understand, we only have eight scholarship players. So playing a style where

we're going to be full fledged outpressing is probably not going to be a smart thing to do with less numbers.

So I will say we will have good intense pressure on the ball and we will knock some balls loose -- Mike played 11 guys, when you say we only have eight scholarship players it will be difficult to play that way.

Q. I know the decision is out of your hands. And I don't mean to be getting ahead of things. But if Missouri should decide to go to the Southeastern Conference, do you think your experience, the contacts you had during your years at Miami, could prove a recruiting advantage that -- since you already know the area and know a lot of the high school coaches in that region?

COACH HAITH: Well, obviously, you're right, I can't talk about it. I think that -- wherever we're at, I feel real confident about our program being able to be successful.

We've got a great start recruiting already this year at Missouri. And I think we're going to be fine in that part of the game, regardless of where we're at.

We do have some great contacts in the southeast, but wherever we've been, we've been able to recruit wherever and I've spent time at Texas and Texas A&M, but obviously my seven years at Miami and I grew up in North Carolina. I was born in New York.

So we have a little bit of contacts all over the country.

Q. Just talking about recruiting, your predecessor had said during Media Days during last year he had stressed the importance of recruiting home-grown talent. Is that a philosophy that you continue, or do you say in order to build my own program I'm going to have to go to the states that I know such as Texas and Florida and North Carolina?

COACH HAITH: I think we've got to do a great job in terms of our recruiting foundation has got to be in the state of Missouri.

We've got to build from that point. We've got to get to St. Louis. We've done a pretty good job here in Kansas City, and I think that's where we've got to start from. And because we got a staff of -- with Isaac Chew, he's from Chicago from the Midwest, but he grew up, spent a lot of time here in Kansas City. Tim Fuller was at Louisville last year.

We've got a staff that has ability to go to different parts of the country, but there's no doubt in my mind our recruiting foundation must be in the state of Missouri.

Q. In a few short weeks you guys will be playing at the One Spirit Classic, how important is it for your team to get back to Joplin and support that community?

COACH HAITH: I think, first of all, I want to applaud the NCAA for giving us an opportunity to have an extra exhibition game and to be a part of that.

I think that as a coach, we want to be able to teach our guys more than just how to dribble a basketball. Want to teach them life skills. And I think this is a great opportunity for our guys to give back.

And you know I had an opportunity to go down to Joplin when it happened, and the pictures did it no service in terms of, the devastation that those folks faced. And sometimes when you have devastation, it's on to the next devastation.

And this game hopefully will bring some awareness back to this and allow us to continue to help those folks get back to some type of normalcy.

Q. Compare the athletes you're recruiting from Missouri versus the ones you recruited while you were at Miami, the kind of athletes you're going for?

COACH HAITH: I think we want to recruit the same type of players. I mean, high level players.

And we had a team in Miami this past year, with the team we left, it was a very big team. I mean, our front line would have been 6'10", 6'11", 6'7". And we had a lot of guys on the bench of that size, too. So we had a lot of size.

But where the team we have at Missouri is speed, quickness, fast. And I think good coaches are able to adjust to the talent they have and what their skill sets are.

And I think we have a different type of team, but we're going to recruit the same type of athletes.

Q. You recruited, if I'm not mistaken, Kim English when you were down at Miami. When you got here, I mean, I assume there's at least some familiarity, comfort level with him.

He's a senior, a team leader. Can you talk about your relationship with Kim and the expectations for him and for him coming into this season?

COACH HAITH: First, I'm really excited having the opportunity to coach Kimmie. I loved him as a player. He got caught into a -- we got a commitment before he was to come on his visit.

And I wouldn't tell Mike Anderson this, but I think we probably would have got him. So we had a really good relationship with him.

I think Kimmie understands if you ask him, he knows he didn't play up to his ability last year. And I think he put a lot of pressure on himself. I expect Kimmie to have a great senior year, I really do. He's been unbelievable in spring, the summer. He's been committed. He's been a really good leader. And I've asked Kimmie to be himself. Sometimes you put so much pressure on yourself and you get out of character. I want him to be who he is as a player.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.